

Potential New Users for a City of Takoma Park Gymnasium

Compiled from past testimony to City Council, Community Center Steering Committee & Recreation Committee-Jan. 4, 2005

PROGRAM	TIME	TYPE
Senior Sports (volleyball, basketball, ping pong)	During School Hours/Mon.-Fri. Sept.-June	Rec Dept./Citizen Volunteer
Senior Physical Fitness (aerobics, yoga)	During School Hours/Mon.-Fri. Sept.-June	Rec Dept./Contractor
Youth Basketball Practices (all ages)	5-8 p.m./Mon-Fri Dec.-Mar & June-Aug.	Rec Dept.
Youth Basketball Games (mid. school, high school)	Weekends/Jan.-March	Rec Dept.
Youth Drop-In Basketball	3-6 p.m./Mon-Fri April-June, Sept.-Nov.	Rec Dept.
Youth Soccer Practices (all ages)	5-8 p.m./Mon-Fri/ Dec.-Mar & June-Aug.	Rec Dept.
Youth Soccer Games (middle school, high school)	Weekends/Jan.-March	Rec Dept.
Youth Softball-Baseball Practices (all ages)	Weekend evenings off times/All Year	Citizen Volunteer
Adult Sports (volleyball, basketball, soccer)	Late evenings/Weekend off times All year	Citizen Volunteer
Adult Sports (volleyball, basketball)	During School Hours/Mon.-Fri. Sept.-June	Corporate Rental
Adult Physical Fitness (jazzercise, aerobics)	Late evenings/Weekend off times/ All year	Contractor/Rec. Dept.
Tot Programs	During School Hours/Mon.-Fri. Sept.-June	Rec Dept.
Flea Markets/Craft Fairs	Weekends/Off Months All Year	Citizen Volunteer
Therapeutic Physical Fitness	During School Hours/Mon.-Fri. Sept.-June	Corporate Rental
Youth Rec. Sports (floor hockey, gymnastics, teen night)	5-8 p.m./Mon-Fri. year round	Rec. Dept.

Recreation Department Current After School and Weekend Use of Area Gyms

Classes

Fencing, dance, kung fu, aerobics, Tae Bo, boxing workout, self defense, tai-chi.

Outreach

Teens and Youth- Thank Goodness it's Friday, drop-in basketball, cheerleading, double dutch team, step team, flag football, adult basketball, YES basketball league (winter and summer,)

Community Programs

Indoor soccer, baseball/softball, youth basketball leagues, volleyball, fun fit.

Summer Camps

Every day in the summer for indoor activities, particularly during inclement weather and code red days.

Afternoon Addition

After school program every day of the week. Playground games, sports.

January 2005

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

TAKOMA PARK RECREATION CENTER

February 2005

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28						

January 2005

	24	Monday	25	Tuesday	26	Wednesday	27	Thursday	28	Friday	29	Saturday	30	Sunday
Early														
8:00 AM														
9:00 AM											(9:00 AM - 6:00 PM) Suto Dance Company			
10:00 AM		(10:00 AM - 3:00 PM) Open Gym		(10:00 AM - 3:00 PM) Open Gym		(10:00 AM - 11:00 AM) African Dance for Tots		(10:00 AM - 11:00 AM) Fun Fit Program (Tot)		(10:00 AM - 11:00 AM) African Dance for Tots				
11:00 AM						(11:00 AM - 1:00 PM) Open Gym		(11:00 AM - 12:00 PM) Rock Creek Academy (Game)		(11:00 AM - 12:00 PM) Rock Creek Academy (Game)				
12:00 PM								(12:00 PM - 1:00 PM) Open Gym		(12:00 PM - 1:00 PM) Open Gym				(12:30 PM - 6:00 PM) Indoor Soccer Program
1:00 PM						(1:00 PM - 3:00 PM) Rock Creek Academy (Rental)		(1:00 PM - 3:00 PM) Rock Creek Academy (Rental)		(1:00 PM - 3:00 PM) Rock Creek Academy (Rental)				
2:00 PM														
3:00 PM		(3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) After-School Program		(3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) After-school Program		(3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) After-School Program		(3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) After-School Program		(3:00 PM - 6:00 PM) After-School Program				
4:00 PM														
Late		(6:00 PM - 8:00 PM) Boxing Workout Class (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM) Adult Open Gym		(6:30 PM - 7:30 PM) Tae Bo Program (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM) Women's Only Basketball		(6:00 PM - 8:00 PM) Boxing Workout Class (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM) Adult Open Gym		(6:30 PM - 7:30 PM) Tae Bo Program (8:00 PM - 10:00 PM) Women's Only Basketball		(6:00 PM - 10:00 PM) Adult Open Gym		(6:00 PM - 8:00 PM) Softball, Babe Ruth, (Rental) (8:00 PM - 9:00 PM) AAU Basketball (Rental)		(6:30 PM - 9:30 PM) Softball, Babe Ruth (Rental)

METRO

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2004

Competing for Elbowroom

Area Officials Struggling to Find Enough Space for Growing Number of Activities

By LISA REIN

Washington Post Staff Writer

The girls of Fairfax 14 Heat set, dunk, dig and slam the volleyball most Monday nights in an elementary school gym so small that its back court is two feet shorter than regulation.

The gym has so many lines painted for basketball and PE drills that the players sometimes foot fault in confusion during serves. But at 7:56 p.m., with four minutes to go until quitting time, the Heat girls are edged off the

floor by the next team of 16- and 17-year-olds waiting impatiently to take their place.

Even with its linoleum, undersize court, the 44-year-old Oakton Elementary gym is a godsend to the exploding Northern Virginia Youth Volleyball League. "It's a multipurpose situation," said assistant coach Robyn Burdett, whose daughter, Sam, plays on the team. "But we've been in some schools where the balls are constantly banging off the rafters because the ceiling's too low."

All over Fairfax County, and in most other Washington suburbs, the indoor gym has become as highly prized

as prime real estate.

Once, boys' basketball was king of the school gymnasium. But today hoops must jostle for space with an array of other activities: girls' basketball, volleyball, badminton, dodge ball, indoor lacrosse and soccer, cheerleading, wrestling, baton twirling, flag and drum corps and even competitive jump-rope. And that smorgasbord is vying with scouts, school bands, drama clubs, table tennis, martial arts, Jazzercise and other pastimes that

See GYMS, B4, Col. 1

Too Many Area Athletes Vying for Too Little Space

GYMS, From B1

are turning schools into round-the-clock community centers.

The passion for sports in booming suburbs is pushing the limits of outdoor playing fields. But now the crunch is moving inside, into still-smaller spaces. With more than 1 million people and a surge in school-age children, the number of young gym users in Fairfax has exploded by 40 percent over six years. But the county's inventory of gym space grew by just 6.7 percent during that time.

And the athletes' passions are changing. Once-seasonal sports have become year-round because of competitive pressures; girls are transforming once-esoteric games into varsity-level play, and immigrant athletes are introducing their favorite pastimes.

In Fairfax, the competition for space became so charged that the county's Athletic Council, in a quest for parity, changed a long-standing gym policy last month that favored elite basketball players over less-skilled athletes. Practice time for all-star travel and other select basketball club teams will be slashed in March from three hours a week to 90 minutes, in every gym. Two teams will have to share a court. The change has

parents and coaches fuming.

"The bottom line is that a gym with basketball hoops is in demand," said John Adams of Springfield, whose daughter Rebecca, 13, plays on an all-star hoops team. "If you're going to let a group that doesn't need the hoops use that space, then I think it's wrong."

The council received similar complaints from hundreds of other parents. But officials say they could not justify continuing to favor a relatively small group of elite players in one sport over tens of thousands of others. "We're trying to spread unhappiness evenly throughout the county," Athletic Council Chairman Steve McLaughlin said. "Gym space is even scarcer than [outdoor] field space, and everyone agrees there isn't enough field space."

Left to fend almost entirely for themselves are adults, who get lowest priority for practice space in many communities.

"That's the main question I have all the time," said Quentin Merrill, a human services worker from Manassas who runs a church basketball league in Prince William County. "Where can we practice?"

Merrill's league books games at a

former school that is now a government building where practice time is on a first-come, first-served basis. The teams could get school gym space starting at 10 p.m. on weeknights, "but people were getting home too late," he said.

Coaches and school principals are clashing over who has rights to the neighborhood school, a public space that has never been booked with so many back-to-back activities. Coaches complain of last-minute changes that leave their teams stranded when recreation officials and the school don't coordinate. Or a school closes one weekend, or schedules gym time for another group.

"One thing every sport knows is that you can be bumped at any time," said Patti Mills, coordinator of the Columbia Ravens, a football and cheerleading league in Howard County, where cheerleading reached varsity status for the first time this year. "People are begging for [practice] permits." The Ravens' five cheerleading leagues practice year-round at River Hill High School in Clarksville, in hallways and on the stage when the gym is booked. They go anywhere they can drag a mat.

In Montgomery, where weekend games are scheduled until midnight, the county recently clamped down on some teams that were scheduling practices in multiple schools. "We had to take a little more control over the space," said Ginny Gong, director of community use of public facilities.

In Fairfax, Robert Dix arrived at Rachel Carson Middle School at 8:15 a.m. on a recent Saturday with 100 girls in his travel basketball league, their parents and grandparents. Dix had permits for a full day of games, but the gym was locked. A former county supervisor, he called the county executive at home, who called the assistant principal. She arrived to open the school at 11:45 a.m. "I happened to know some people to call, but how many coaches are in that situation?"



BY RICH LIPSKE—THE WASHINGTON POST

Sam Burdett, 13, leaps for a ball at Oakton Elementary. Her mother, Assistant Coach Robyn Burdett, says that the school gym, though crowded, is a welcome haven.

Dix said.

Some principals are loath to subject their gyms to constant wear and tear.

"From an outside standpoint it may look like we're shutting things down, but it may be for something the school needs to do," said Paul Jansen, Fairfax's coordinator of student activities and athletic programs.

For many parents, what gets lost in the tangle of scheduling is the fitness, teamwork and healthy competition organized sports are meant to instill in young people. With a growing gang presence in the suburbs, sports activities provide structure to keep teenagers out of trouble.

Many suburbs have limited space in private and community gyms—and it's expensive or booked months in advance. In the District, a mini-construction boom has taken the pressure off schools, with six new recreation centers in the last two years and four more planned to be opened in 2005. But many of them sit empty because players don't know about them, recreation officials said.

Parents of talented athletes are angry that their children are playing in elementary and middle school gyms with low ceilings and carpet or linoleum floors that they say are slow and unsafe, because high schools are packed with varsity and junior varsity teams. They worry that minimal practice time in substandard conditions could jeopardize a chance for a college scholarship.

"The county is taking the best kids

and putting them in inferior gyms," said E.J. Thomas, a member of Fairfax's Youth Basketball Council.

Yet every amateur player is adjusting to changing times. Organized sports are attracting younger and younger athletes, lured by older siblings and the pressure of competition created by so many players. Meanwhile, the glamour of cheerleading—now a varsity college sport in Maryland—and the sun-drenched beach volleyball games of the summer Olympics are enticing more girls to the gym.

One of the best shows in town can be found at Holmes Middle School near Alexandria on Tuesday nights, when 20 badminton players from China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Hong Kong smash the shuttlecock at speeds up to 160 mph. Who knew that hairpin drops could be so breathtaking? To Americans, badminton may be a sport of picnic leisure—but it's building a following here, with clubs in the District and Montgomery County.

At Holmes, the birdie continually sails into the ceiling rafters. But it's a minor inconvenience, considering the alternatives.

"When I came to this area, I had problems finding places to play," said Clement Chan, who came from Hong Kong and founded the Evergreen Badminton Club, which got its first regular practice slot at Holmes this winter. "But we worked with the county to convince them there's a demand for badminton."